

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
COLORADO RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN  
GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

Coconino County, Arizona

Abstract: This *Draft Environmental Impact Statement / Colorado River Management Plan* describes and analyzes alternatives for the management of recreational use of the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park. For purposes of this plan, the Colorado River has been divided into two geographic sections, with a specific set of alternatives for each section. For the upper section from Lees Ferry (River Mile [RM] 0) to Diamond Creek (RM 226), the plan considers eight alternatives, including a no-action alternative (Alternative A) and a preferred alternative (Alternative H). For the Lower Gorge section from Diamond Creek (RM 226) to Lake Mead (RM 277), the plan considers five alternatives, including a no-action alternative (Alternative 1), a National Park Service preferred alternative (Alternative 4), and a Hualapai Tribe proposed alternative (Alternative 5). The park shares a common boundary with the Hualapai Tribe along 108 miles of the Colorado River, and the Hualapai Tribe is a cooperating agency in the preparation of this *Draft Environmental Impact Statement*.

For the Lees Ferry alternatives, the alternatives represent different mixes and limits of group size, trip length, launches per day, user-days, seasonal variations, motorized and non-motorized use, commercial and noncommercial use, and other factors. Major issues addressed in the alternatives include the appropriate level of visitor use consistent with natural and cultural resource protection and visitor experience goals; allocation of use between commercial and noncommercial groups; the noncommercial permit system; the level of motorized and non-motorized boat use; the range of services provided to the public; the use of helicopters to transport river passengers to and from the river; and appropriate levels and types of upstream travel from Lake Mead. The National Park Service's preferred alternative (Alternative H) provides for a mix of motorized and non-motorized use, a six-month non-motorized use season, more evenly distributed launch patterns, and changes to allocation and permit systems.

For the Lower Gorge section of the river, major differences in alternatives include limits on commercial launches from Diamond Creek, pontoon boat operations in the Quartermaster area, and facilities and upriver travel from Lake Mead. The National Park Service's preferred alternative (Alternative 4) is the same as the Hualapai Tribe's proposed alternative (Alternative 5) except for lower than current averages of pontoon boat operations, and allowing upriver travel to Separation Canyon at full lake levels. Alternative 5 would have much higher than current levels of pontoon boat operations, and it would restrict upriver travel to below RM 273. Both alternatives would reduce current commercial group sizes and allow more overnight use in the Diamond Creek to Quartermaster section.

The potential environmental consequences of each alternative are evaluated, including impacts on natural resources, cultural resources, visitor experience, socioeconomic resources, park operations, and adjacent lands.

If you wish to comment on the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement*, you may mail comments to the name and address below. This document will be on public review for 90 days. Please note that names and addresses of people who comment become part of the public record. **If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment.** We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety.

For further information concerning this document, contact Rick Ernenwein, Planning Team Leader, Grand Canyon National Park, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023-0129, or call 928-779-6279. Specific information on how to submit comments can be found on the park's Internet website at <<http://www.nps.gov/grca/crmp>>.

## **Guide to This Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

This *Draft Environmental Impact Statement* is in two volumes.

### **Volume 1:**

- Chapter 1. Purpose of and Need for Action
- Chapter 2. Alternatives, Including the Preferred Alternatives
- Chapter 3. Affected Environment

### **Volume 2:**

- Chapter 4. Environmental Consequences
- Chapter 5. Consultation and Coordination
- Selected Bibliography
- Index

Appendixes for this *Draft Environmental Impact Statement* are provided electronically. The electronic files are available from the park's Colorado River Management Plan Internet website at <<http://www.nps.gov/grca/crmp>>. The appendixes are also available on compact disk and can be requested by writing to Rick Ernenwein, Grand Canyon National Park, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023-0129, or calling 928-779-6279.